

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Education Office, Blenheim, February, 1910.

I have the honour to present my sixth general report on the schools of Marlborough.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.—Eighty-five were open during part or all of the past year. Of these, twenty-two operated only for one, two, or three quarters. At the end of the year schedules were sent to the seventy-eight schools then operating, and from the contents of these schedules the table of ages and numbers in standards is compiled.

INSPECTION.—Eighty-one public and four private schools were inspected. Seventy-three public and three private schools were given announced visits in the latter half of the year, and eight Standard VI central examinations were held. Four schools open during small portions of the year were not visited. Their aggregate roll was eighteen. Arrangements have been made for the supply of hyloplate and models where these are most urgently required. The rearrangement of the staff at Blenheim has enabled the school to be worked more effectively both in regard to accommodation and to distribution of the staff. Inaccuracy or incompleteness of the registers is still too frequent in the smaller schools. The schemes of work have been brought to a fairly satisfactory form in twenty-three of the largest schools; there is no part of the work in which teachers may more clearly demonstrate their ability than in the arrangement of the schemes and the selection of appropriate material. It is not intended that these programmes should be of any set form: they should be flexible within the range of the syllabus according to the needs of each locality, the standards represented, and the character of the pupils. In particular, however, it may be mentioned that every subject taught in the school should appear in the scheme, and also a more or less general indication of the treatment of morals, health, and temperance. In a number of small schools the log-book has not been systematically kept; the date of receipt of all circulars, &c., sent from the Board should appear in this book. In private schools the registers should be carefully preserved as records. The worst school grounds are probably those of Onamalutu and Wairau Valley, where blackberry and gorse abound. For the coming year the most important requirements are better teaching-conditions at Riverlands, Nopera Bay, Onauku, Grassmere, and Richmond Brook, increased shelter at Picton, a residence at Grovetown, and a science-room in Blenheim. If the last-named were erected at the High School it would suit the purpose of teachers' secondary, and possibly technical classes. To the works reported as being in hand at the end of last year, an extra room at Carluke and another at Seddon are the only additions of importance.

EXAMINATION.—The new system, whereby the head teacher undertakes the promotion of his pupils, has been brought into operation in all schools; but suggestions are freely given to uncertificated teachers. Judging by the results shown in the schedules returned at the end of the year, there is a tendency to exercise the power of promotion with an increasing sense of the needs of each case. In general, the marks awarded are much higher than I should have expected to give, but the number of promotions is nearer the average than the marks. In other words, the teachers do not always follow their marking of the papers, but make decision on their general opinion of the pupil. It is undesirable that there should be much divergence between the two expressions of opinion. The following observations may assist younger teachers. These sometimes give a mark that the Inspector would consider "excellent" to a child that, in conversation, they describe as "not satisfactory." In the schedules something like eighteen pupils out of twenty-one tested will on occasion be marked "excellent," or even given full marks, in arithmetic. Of course, awards like that have little value. Probably experience will set these matters right. The explanation appended to the standard words may aid in determining the mark to be allotted. If the marks are on a scale of 20:—

0 to 8—Inferior (*i.e.*, nothing, or very poor).

8 to 9—Moderate (*i.e.*, weak).

10 to 11—Fair (*i.e.*, passable).

12 to 13—Satisfactory. (This is not a low mark; it means that one may be satisfied with the work as a reasonable performance by an average child. It represents 60 to 65 per cent.)

14 to 15—Good (*i.e.*, decidedly good; above the average).

16 to 20—Excellent (*i.e.*, the rare child).

NUMBER OF PUPILS.—This table represents the state of the schools in December:—

Classes.					Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in Each Class.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	24	19	Yrs. mos. 14 5
" VI	...	...	...	...	185	179	14 0
" V	...	...	...	...	217	212	13 1
" IV	...	...	...	...	276	258	12 4
" III	...	...	...	...	245	240	11 4
" II	...	...	...	...	272	263	10 4
" I	...	...	...	...	279	276	9 3
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	795	759	7 3
Total for 1909					2,293	2,206	11 6*
Total for 1908					2,175	2,019	...

* Mean of average age.